

months in diagram 27. The rise was broken only in September, the month of the influenza epidemic.

The earliest needs of our troops in France were met by French Hotchkiss machine guns and Chauchat automatic rifles. A little later, divisions going over were provided with Vickers heavy guns and Chauchat automatic rifles. After July 1, divisions embarking were equipped with light and heavy Brownings. Both Browning guns met with immediate success and with the approval of foreign officers as well as with that of our own.

Although the light and the heavy Browning guns were brought into production in February and April of 1918, they were not used in battle until September. This was not because of any shortage of supply in the later summer months but because of a deliberate and most significant judgment on the part of Gen. Pershing. After careful tests of the new weapons had been made in Europe the American commander in chief decided that the two new Brownings were so greatly superior to any machine guns in use by any of the armies on either side that the wisest course would be to wait until several divisions could be equipped with them and a plentiful future supply assured before using them in battle at all.

What he feared was that if the first of the guns to reach the expeditionary forces were used in battle there would always be some chance that one might be captured by the Germans. If this should happen it was possible that with their quick recognition of the importance of any military improvement and the demonstrated German industrial capacity for quantity production, they might begin the immediate manufacture of German Brownings. In this event the advantage of the possession of large numbers of greatly improved types of machine guns and automatic rifles would be partly lost to the American forces.

For these reasons the Brownings were not used in combat until they were used in large numbers in the Meuse-Argonne battle. There they amply justified the faith of the American commander and the Ordnance Department in their superior qualities.

The total number of machine guns of American manufacture